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ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Possible common themes for the follow-up of major international conferences during the coordination segment of the substantive session of 1998 of the Economic and Social Council

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In its agreed conclusions 1995/1 (A/50/3/Rev.1, chap. III, para. 22), the Economic and Social Council invited the Secretary-General, taking into account the suggestions made in his 1995 report on coordinated follow-up to major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields (E/1995/86, para. 57) and based on the work of relevant subsidiary bodies and through consultations with Member States, relevant organs of the United Nations system and specialized agencies, to offer suggestions for possible common themes for follow-up of major international conferences for consideration and decision by the Council. The Council also decided that the theme for the follow-up to conferences would be chosen at the Council's previous substantive session to allow for adequate preparations.

2. In its resolution 1996/78, the Commission on Human Rights recommended that the Council consider devoting the coordination segment of its substantive session of 1998 to the question of the coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action 1/as part of the 1998 five-year review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

3. In its decision 1996/283, the Council endorsed the recommendation of the Commission on Human Rights. The Assembly, in its resolution 51/118, welcomed and supported that decision of the Council.

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4. Should the Council choose to select this theme, 1998 will be the first year that it focuses its coordination segment on the overall review of one conference. (Themes examined by the Council at its coordination segment to date are listed in box 1.) Indeed, in its agreed conclusions 1995/1, the Council decided that, in that segment, it should carry out a review of cross-cutting themes common to major international conferences and/or contribute to an overall review of the implementation of the programme of action of a United Nations conference.

Box 1. Themes considered by the Council at its coordination segments:

1992
- Assistance in the eradication of poverty and support to vulnerable groups, including assistance during the implementation of structural adjustment programmes
- Prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and programmes addressed to the mitigation of its negative socio-economic consequences

1993
- Coordination of humanitarian assistance: emergency relief and the continuum to rehabilitation and development
- Preventive action and intensification of the struggle against malaria and diarrhoeal diseases, in particular cholera

1994
- Science and technology for development
- International cooperation within the United Nations system against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

1995
- Coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system and implementation of the results of major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

1996
- Coordination of United Nations system activities for poverty eradication (three subthemes)

1997
- Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system
- Freshwater, including clean and safe water supply and sanitation

5. This theme would also be in line with earlier proposals by the Secretary-General (see E/1996/88). In 1996, the Secretary-General suggested that the Council, in the context of a multi-year programme of work, consider choosing a theme related to participation, democratization, human rights and non-governmental organizations, the year following its examination of a topic on mainstreaming the gender perspective. 2/

6. The Secretary-General also identified a number of common themes emanating from conferences in his 1995 report on coordinated follow-up to major international conferences (E/1995/86), which are presented in box 2. They continue to serve as useful categories for selecting a theme on coordinated follow-up to conferences.

Box 2. **Themes identified by the Secretary-General in his 1995 report on coordinated follow-up to major international conferences (E/1995/86, para. 57):**

(a) A stable macroeconomic policy framework conducive to development;
(b) External debt and finance for development;
(c) International trade and commodities;
(d) Science and technology;
(e) Eradication of poverty and hunger;
(f) Access to productive occupational opportunities, full employment and family income;
(g) Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women;
(h) Basic social services for all: primary health care, nutrition, education, safe water and sanitation, population and shelter;
(i) Promoting social integration;
(j) Environment and natural resources;
(k) Africa and special categories;
(l) Participation, democracy, human rights, accountability and partnership with major groups and non-governmental organizations.

7. Furthermore, in selecting a theme for its coordination segment the Council should take the following factors into account:

(a) The theme should be a major cross-cutting outcome of several international conferences in the economic, social or related fields;

(b) The theme should be a subject of operational relevance to a number of organizations of the system and/or a subject in respect of which several functional commissions have been active;

(c) The theme should have a significant policy dimension so as to maximize the benefit that could be derived from the presence of heads of agencies, funds, programmes and other bodies of the United Nations system during the discussions;

(d) The discussion of the theme by the Council and the agreed conclusions on the theme should contribute to enhanced coordination of policies and activities by the United Nations system.

Recommendation

8. In accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1996/78 and Council decision 1996/283, the Secretary-General proposes that the Council consider taking a formal decision that the theme of its 1998 coordination segment on the follow-up to conferences will be "Coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action", as part of the 1998 five-year review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

9. It should also be underscored that the Assembly, in its resolutions 45/264 and 48/162, provided for the Council's coordination segment to deal with one or more themes. In resolution 50/227, the Assembly provided that the Council may give consideration to choosing a second theme dealing with concrete sectoral issues. Thus, in addition to the theme for follow-up to conferences, the Council may also choose a sectoral theme, should it decide to do so, at its substantive session.

Notes

1/ Report of the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 14-25 June 1993 (A/CONF.157/24 (Part I)), chap. III.

2/ The Secretary-General proposed the following multi-year programme (E/1996/88, para. 18):

Theme	Year
1. A theme related to the national and international economic environment, for example:	
- Promotion of a stable macroeconomic policy framework	1977
- External debt and finance for development	
2. Mainstreaming the gender perspective in the activities of the United Nations system	1998
3. A theme related to participation, democratization, human rights and non-governmental organizations	1999
4. Eradication of poverty and hunger	2000